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Third Of Adults Watch Religious Television In 30-Day Period

PRINCETON, N.J. – A recent survey on religious television programs by the Annenberg School of Communications and The Gallup Organization indicated that approximately one adult in three (32%) had watched a religious television program in the 30 days prior to being interviewed while 18% had done so in the past 7 days.

Other highlights from the survey:

- Sermons, music, and inspiration were selected most often as the gratifications that viewers (those who had watched a religious program on TV during the past 30 days) especially liked about the programs they watched.
- The most common period for viewing is Sunday before 10 AM, when approximately four in 10 viewers watch. About two in 10 watch during "church hours" on Sunday (10 AM to 12 noon).
- Nearly one-third of all viewers had made financial contributions to the programs they watched. The median amount contributed during the past year was $30.
- One viewer in three had received literature from a religious program during the past year; one in 10 had written or called back.
- Viewers were more likely than non-viewers to register dissatisfaction with changes in moral standards in the U.S., but were just as satisfied with the overall religious climate, and were more satisfied with their local churches.
- On the whole, viewers were no more likely than non-viewers to have specific complaints about their churches.
- Compared with non-viewers, viewers tend to be older, less-well educated, southern, rural, nonwhite, and female. Because of their age, they are also somewhat more likely to be shut-ins and to have health problems.
- Religious TV viewers are likely to spend only slightly more time watching conventional television than are non-veiwers. Except for religious programs and a disinclination to watch movies, viewers' taste in TV programming is not too dissimilar from non-viewers'.
- Viewers are more likely than non-viewers to be Protestants, to say that religion is personally important to them, to hold evangelical views, to be church members, and to attend church regularly.
- The greatest factor distinguishing viewers from non-viewers is the extent to which they hold evangelical views.
- Only 3% of religious television viewers say viewing has decreased their involvement in church. But one in six (18%) says religious TV contributes more than the

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UNITED STATES CHURCHES AND MEMBERS

	No. of Bodies Reporting	No. of Churches	No. of Members
Buddhists	1	62	100,000
Eastern Churches	18	1,632	3,859,668
Jews*	1	3,500	5,725,000
Old Catholic, Polish National Catholic, Armenian Churches	7	427	924,861
Protestants**	186	310,284	76,754,009
Roman Catholic	1	24,071	52,088,774
Miscellaneous***	5	1,135	150,747
Totals	219	341,111	139,603,059

**Including Orthodox, Conservative and Reformed branches.*
***Some bodies included here are, strictly speaking, not "Protestant" in the usual sense, such as various Latter-Day Saints groups and Jehovah's Witnesses.*
****This is a grouping of bodies officially non-Christian, including those such as Spiritualists, Ethical Culture Movement, and Unitarian Universalists.*

Source: National Council of Churches

Organized Religion - A Part Of Life For 44% Of Canadians Today

When Canadians were asked recently if organizied religion was a relevant part of their life today, 44% said it was – down from 52% who felt this way in 1978.

This decline appears in most regions, among young and old, and among men and women. But involvement with organized religion is still more prevalent among older Canadians, women, and those living in the eastern regions.

The findings are based on in-home interviews with 1,059 adults, 18 and over, conducted in May.

This question was asked:

Is organized religion a relevant part of your life at the present time, or not?

The following table compares sub-groups of the population:

RELEVANCE OF ORGANIZED RELIGION
(Percent saying "yes")

	1984	1978
National	44%	52%
Atlantic	51	60
Quebec	62	66
Ontario	38	50
Prairies	37	36
British Columbia	23	37
Men	39	46
Women	48	58
18 to 29 years	33	38
30 to 49 years	43	52
50 and older	54	62

BAPTIZED OR INCLUSIVE MEMBERSHIP IN SELECTED RELIGIOUS BODIES

	1981	1982	+ or -	% Inc. or Dec.
American Lutheran Church	2,346,207	2,346,710	+503	nil
Assemblies of God	1,788,394	1,879,182	+90,788	+5.1%
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	1,173,135	1,156,458	-16,677	-1.4%
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints	3,490,000	3,521,000	+31,000	+0.9%
The Episcopal Church	2,767,440	2,794,139	+26,699	+1.0%
Lutheran Church in America	2,921,829	2,925,655	+3,826	+0.1%
Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod	2,636,715	2,630,823	-5,892	-0.2%
Presbyterian Church in the United States*	823,143	814,931	-8,212	-1.0%
Roman Catholic Church	51,207,579	52,088,774	+881,195	+1.7%
Southern Baptist Convention	13,782,644	13,991,709	+209,065	+1.5%
United Church of Christ	1,726,244	1,716,723	-9,521	-0.6%
United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.*	2,379,249	2,342,441	-36,808	-1.5%
United Methodist Church	9,457,012	9,416,961	-40,051	-0.4%

**These bodies merged in 1983 to form the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*

Some inclusive membership figures for smaller religious bodies

Baptist General Conference	127,662	129,928	+2,266	+1.8%
Christian and Missionary Alliance	195,042	204,713	+9,671	+5.0%
Christian Reformed Church	215,411	223,976	+8,565	+4.0%
Church of God (Anderson, IN)	178,551	184,685	+6,134	+3.4%
Church of God (Cleveland, TN)	456,797	463,992	+7,195	+1.6%
Church of the Nazarene	492,203	498,491	+6,288	+1.3%
Free Methodist Church of N.D.	69,949	70,657	+708	+1.0%
Friends United Meeting	60,084	59,338	-746	-1.2%
Jehovah's Witnesses	588,503	619,188	+30,685	+5.2%
Mennonite Church	99,651	101,501	+1,850	+1.9%
Presbyterian Church in America	136,582	149,548	+12,966	+9.5%
Reformed Church in America	345,762	346,293	+531	+0.1%
Seventh-Day Adventists	588,536	606,310	+17,774	+3.0%
Wesleyan Church	103,712	105,221	+1,509	+1.5%

Source: Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, 1984. © National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

Meet Your Market: A Profile Of America's Christian Community

(Article by George Barna, National Research Director for American Resource Bureau in Wheaton, Ill., appearing in the July, 1983 issue of Bookstore Journal and directed to Christian bookstore owners.)

A typical member of this group [America's Christian Community] is female, 50 years of age (or older), married, and from the South. The group she represents? Those 45 to 50 million American adults who claim the title "born-again Christian." It is this group of people that you, the Christian bookstore owner, serve. They are, in fact, your market.

In any business, even a small Christian bookstore, success depends upon the accumulation, analysis and application of current information about the market it serves. This article, therefore, presents some general information about today's American Christian market, and suggests ways you can use the information to expand your current outreach.

TYPES OF INFORMATION

Of all the information available about the Christian market, what you will find most useful falls into three categories.

Demographic and psychographic data make up the first category. Demographic data are the personal characteristics of the market – for example, age, sex, income and education. These variables are important because they help you understand the market's behavior and perspective. Psychographic factors are those that describe the market's general lifestyle. If you know the demographic and psychographic information about your market, you can carry products and develop strategies for selling them that will meet your market's needs.

Purchasing behavior and consumption patterns make up the second category of information you need to know. Through an evaluation of what people buy, and when and how they make their purchases, you can adapt your selling strategies to the market's buying habits.

Product needs of the market make up the third information category. But you must be careful that the information you gain in this category is based on objective facts, not intuition or personal preference. Remember, the retailer who succeeds is the one who sells what the customer wants and needs, not what the retailer wants to sell.

THE CHRISTIAN MARKET

Now that you know the categories of information required for a valid analysis of your market, what are some of the specifics within these categories? For several years, the American Resource Bureau has been tracking the growth of the American Christian public and filling in these categories with details.

The following information is a brief demographic summary of the Christian population in this country. And while these figures may not reflect the exact nature of any single bookstore's market, they should give you some insights into the market's general character and direction.

The concept of religion and its practice in America is as diversified as the American people. But 95% of the adult population (people 18 years and older) profess a belief in God, and almost four out of every five Americans claim affiliation with a Christian denomination (Protestant or Catholic).

You might be surprised to know that nearly three out of every five American adults say that they have made a "personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in my life today." About half of those individuals can be classified "born-again Christians" – those who claim salvation solely on the basis of Jesus's atonement for their sins by death on the cross.

According to survey and census figures, approximately 90 to 100 million adults have acknowledged a personal commitment to Jesus. And of those, the "born again" segment includes 45 to 50 million.

DEMOGRAPHIC ATTRIBUTES

The Christian population has distinct characteristics that set it apart from other markets. For example:

- **Females are more likely than males to be Christian.** Sixty-one percent of America's women claim a personal commitment to Jesus, compared to just 48 percent of the men. And within the Christian community, women constitute a majority (about 55 percent).

- **The older a person is, the more likely he or she is to be Christian.** Those in the 18- to 34-year-old age group comprise 40 percent of the U.S. population, but just 30 percent of the Christian community. (In fact, the 18- to 24-year-old group represents 18 percent of the national population, but only 10 percent of the Christian base.) Thirty-seven percent of the U.S. population is comprised of those 50 years or older, while 43 percent of the Christian population is made up of this age group.

- **The vast majority of Christians are in the middle-income range ($15,000-$25,000).** And the income distribution between Christian and non-Christian households is virtually indistinguishable.

- **About one out of every three Christians has attended college, and half that number have graduated.**

- **Blacks are more likely to be Christians than are whites.** Sixty-seven percent of the U.S. black population

have made personal commitments to Jesus, as compared to 52 percent of the white population. However, because of the greater number of whites, this segment makes up the bulk of the Christian population in this country (86 percent).

- **Seventy percent of adult Christians are married; 15 percent are single; and the remaining 15 percent are widowed, divorced, or separated.** This percentage distribution is identical to that of the non-Christian public.

- **The majority of Christians are located in the South and Southwest regions of the U.S., and the least number are located in the Northeast.** Also, the size of the Christian population consistently decreases as the size of the city (about the 100,000 population mark) increases. Although large cities contain fewer Christians, proportionally, than suburban and rural areas, their size still makes them the largest centers of Christian population.

- **About two-thirds of those identifying with a Protestant denomination have made a commitment to Jesus,** while only two-fifths (43 percent) of the Catholics have done so. Protestants are twice as likely to claim the "born again" status as Catholics (44 percent, as compared to 19 percent).

CHRISTIAN BOOKSTORE MARKET

Now, to narrow the scope from the general Christian public, the following information focuses on characteristics of those who buy Christian books.

Americans, Christians and non-Christians alike, are not voracious book readers. Only about half of the public reads at least one book in any given month. Of that number, two-thirds read three or fewer books, and the remaining one-third read at least four books in an average month. (Remember: these statistics include all books, not just religious books.)

Those Christians who do read tend to be "upscale" – more highly educated, higher on the income scale – and younger than the "average" Christian. Also, women read more extensively than men.

An even lower number of Christians (about one in three) buy a book during a typical month, and only one in seven buyers (14 percent) spend more than $20 a month on books. Likewise, just one in seven Christian adults purchase at least one record album or cassette tape during a given month, and only nine percent of them spend more than $20 for those purchases. Books sell best among those in the 18 to 49 age range, while albums and tapes appeal to the under-35 segment.

The potential for growth in this market is significant. Consider the fact that nearly half (46 percent) of the Christian public has never been inside a Christian bookstore, and another one-third visits these stores only once or twice a year. Record and book clubs add an almost insignificant number to the market – only one percent of the adult population belong to a religious record or book club.

In summary, Christian bookstores have an active market of less than 20 percent of the Christian public – approximately 15 million of the 90 to 100 million who consider themselves Christian.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Now that you know the Christian market potential what steps can you and your store take to reach that potential in your area. With serious review of the situation and a little creative thinking, myriad solutions will come to mind. But to get those creative gears turning, consider the following suggestions:

- **Combat low visibility by waging a more aggressive and cost-effective advertising campaign.** Identify the characteristics of the Christian market in your area (by age, sex, income, education, location, etc.) and evaluate how well your current advertising uses that information. Consider using other media and new advertising formats.
- **Use the media for publicity.** If something newsworthy is taking place, provide copy and pictures. You might also offer the local newspaper a book review column for weekly publication and consider providing a local best-seller list.
- **Raise awareness and expand your customer base by broadening the range of your products and services.** People who avoid bookstores might come in if you offered a crafts class one night a week, or a Hebrew course one morning a month. Bring people together in your store: sponsor classes, invite touring authors for an autograph/reception, conduct Bible studies, hold film or video screenings. Also, initiate new services that will increase your foot traffic: a paperback book exchange, a used album library, field trips, senior citzen programs, etc.
- **Circumvent your secular competition by "repositioning" your store.** Become more than just a bookstore – become a Christian "supermarket," or Christian "department store." If you offer more than books, the title "bookstore" is limiting and may limit your market potential.
- **Build closer ties with the local churches.** Besides providing direct business, they can help you through word-of-mouth advertising, joint sponsorship of events and activities, and a tacit endorsement of your store.
- **Collect as much systematic data about your customers as possible.** Brief instore surveys can provide valuable information about your market's demographic characteristics, buying habits, and product needs. Besides in-store surveys, churches might also help provide this information. You should also stay abreast of national trends and integrate the analysis of your own data with current national statistics. Remember: the market is always changing, and you need to change with it – even stay one step ahead if possible.

If, as many people believe, this decade is to see a new era of spiritual revival, Christian publishers and booksellers have a responsibility to lead the way. Understanding the nature and needs of the Christian market is the first and most important step in meeting that responsibility.

Gallup Comments On Religious Television In NRB Magazine

(Reprint of an article by George Gallup, Jr. in the June issue of RELIGIOUS BROADCASTING *– magazine of the National Religious Broadcasters.)*

With recent surveys by Gallup and the Annenberg School of Communications dispelling the belief that religious TV programs drain members and money from local churches, denominational leaders of all faiths have added incentive to make full and creative use of the electronic media to inform and deepen the faith of the American people.

Certainly the need is great and it may be that use of the electronic media is the most effective way to overcome certain trends that threaten to undermine organized religion in America – for example, a shockingly low level of Biblical knowledge, lack of spiritual discipline and an often superficial religious lifestyle.

Furthermore, the absence of the church's presence on a major scale from television and radio has undoubtedly weakened the influence of the church in our society and has permitted our lives to be conditioned almost totally by the secular version of reality. The real competition to organized religion, notes the Annenberg report, comes from general, not religious television.

Few Americans would disagree that television, while having certain positive effects, also has a deleterious impact on society. A majority feels there is an overemphasis on sex and on violence. Others feel that television distorts reality and promotes materialism.

POTENTIAL IS ENORMOUS

Given new technologies, a nation that spends several hours a day in front of the TV set, and increasing interest among Americans in religious and spiritual matters, the potential impact of religious TV and radio on our lives is enormous.

But it is a potential that is being only partly realized. Although nine in 10 Americans say religion is either "very" or "fairly important" in their lives, only about one-fifth of the adult population spends any time at all watching religious programs on TV during a given week. In addition, more than half of non-viewers claim to have heard or read little or nothing about religious programs on television.

Not only is the audience only a relatively small segment of the population, but it includes a disproportionate number of older persons, women, and persons in the lower education and income groups. In addition, this audience tends to be more conservative and "fundamentalist" than the rest of the population.

So it is clear that if religious TV programs are to have a major impact on the religious life of the nation as a whole, programs will have to be created that will appeal to a broad spectrum of churches and to persons who are only mildly interested in religion. This will mean greater efforts to develop movies and plays with a religious message – perhaps the most effective way of reaching people – and programs that have greater theological and educational content. For persons of some denominations, religious ideas should not be dealt with in strictly religious programs but through drama and movie biographies. And many among the unchurched might be better reached through programs dealing with ethics and values in the broad sense, since this is of at least some interest to virtually everyone, rather than through programs of a traditionally religious nature.

It should also be recognized that building and keeping an audience is extremely difficult because of the nature of television and requires experts; therefore, a major focus in the nation's seminaries should be on communications and television skills. Efforts should be made to develop new TV and radio personalities who are compelling and have a solid theological background.

If religious TV is to play a key role in the religious lives of Americans as a whole in the years ahead, certain basic needs should be met, including the following:

1. **The need for basic religious information.** In one sense, the churches of the nation have failed in their educational task – the state of Biblical knowledge is shockingly low. The electronic media can help fill the gaps in our knowledge.

2. **The need for greater spiritual discipline in our lives.** Americans need practical help in bringing the Bible into their daily lives and learning to pray in a way which inspires them to sacrificial action on behalf of others.

3. **The need to feel better about ourselves.** A Gallup survey for the Robert Schuller Ministries found that people's feelings of closeness to God are an important factor in their sense of self-worth.

4. **The need for fellowship.** Religious TV and radio should encourage viewers and listeners to participate in corporate worship and to join small prayer fellowship groups. Such efforts should be directed toward fostering ecumenism and better understanding among people of different faiths.

Television and radio are surely among God's greatest gifts for spreading the Gospel and for informing and deepening faith. It is therefore of great importance that all of our creative talents are brought to the task of making the best use of this great medium for God's work.

Church Attendance In Canada Remains Steady At 36 Percent

Church attendance, on a typical May Sunday in Canada, has remained fairly steady over the past five years, and today stands at 36%.

The following table shows results of this question:

Did you, yourself, happen to attend church or synagogue in the last seven days?

CHURCH/SYNAGOGUE ATTENDANCE

	National	Roman Catholic	Protestant
	%	%	%
1984	36	50	29
1983	36	51	27
1982	35	48	27
1981	37	51	29
1980	35	50	26
1975	41	61	25
1970	44	65	28
1965	55	83	32
1957	60	87	43

Attendance is highest in the Atlantic provinces and lowest in British Columbia. Women, those fifty years or older, and persons whose formal education ended at the public school level are more likely to have attended.

The 1984 results are based on in-person interviews with 1,059 adults, 18 and older, conducted in May.

ADULT RELIGIOUS TV VIEWING

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church to his or her spiritual life, and one in three (34%) says this about religious TV's contribution to his or her information on moral and social issues.

- When level of religiosity and other factors are held constant, religious television viewing does not seem to be associated with lower levels of church attendance, volunteer work, or church contributions in the sample as a whole.
- Within small subgroups of the population, however, religious viewing does seem to be associated with lower religious involvement, holding subjective religiosity constant. These subgroups include persons requiring assistance in going places, persons past the age of fifty, divorced persons, those with low levels of education, and those who have become dissatisfied with their local church.
- More than half of non-viewers claim to have heard or read little or nothing about religious programs on television.
- Non-viewers have negative rather than positive attitudes toward religious television by a 3-to-1 ratio. A higher ratio is found among college graduates, easterners, persons not holding evangelical views, and persons who seldom or never attend church.

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PRINCETON RELIGION RESEARCH CENTER
P.O. Box 310
53 Bank Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08542

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Cong. Info. Serv.
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Bethesda, MD 20814

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